

Briefing
11 AUG 1953

II. THE SOVIET POSITION IN GERMANY

Dissemination
Current Soviet policy on Germany suggests that the USSR intends to maintain its precarious position in East Germany. The Kremlin, through the East German Communists, is attempting to overcome the knotty problem of East German unrest through a combination of popular economic concessions and repressive measures directed against the most active resistance groups. The sparing use of Soviet military forces since the June riots reflects in part its reluctance to undermine further the standing of the East German regime. In addition the USSR cannot pose as the protector of the downtrodden worker when its troops are engaged in active repression of the East German labor.

Dissemination
At the same time, the USSR is continuing its past strategy of attempting in every available way to impede West Germany's contribution to Western strength. Repeated Kremlin declarations in favor of a unified Germany apparently are intended to delay and confuse Allied attempts to integrate West Germany into a rearmcd Western Europe. The Soviet appeal to West Germany, however, is undermined by the basic weakness of the Soviet position in East Germany.

As a result, recent Soviet and East German policy statements have had to be confined to a position on Germany which is basically uncompromising on at least four points:

1. A big power conference must be called to draw up a peace treaty.
2. Any treaty must recognize the present Oder-Neisse boundary.
3. A united Germany cannot be militarily allied with the West.
4. Free elections can be discussed only after the formulation of a peace treaty.

This basic Soviet position has been elaborated in a series of editorials and the Soviet note of 4 August to the three Western powers.

The Soviet stand on Germany must be weighed against the popular discontent and economic distress in East Germany. The enthusiastic response to the western food relief program has revealed the contempt and hatred of the East German people for their rulers. The unpopularity of the ruling Socialist Unity Party is now so great that only the armed might of the Soviet occupation forces shields the regime from overthrow by the people.

During the two week period of the western food relief program close to a million East Germans have defied the Communists in obtaining some 2.2 million food packages in West Berlin. More than a hunger demonstration, this is an act of popular insubordination to the East German regime.

As the food program rounds out its third week the earlier enthusiasm appears to be somewhat diminished. However, as long as some form of food program is in progress, the East German regime must continue its repressive measures. Any relaxation would probably result in further anti-Communist demonstrations.

The communist hierarchy in East Germany is completely discredited in the eyes of the people. Even within its own ranks there are factions opposing the formal ^{attempts to Sovietize} [sovietization] of East Germany. Recent purges have removed the principle sources of opposition within the party ranks. The result has been a strengthening of the position of Walter Ulbricht, East Germany's "strong man," who paradoxically is generally associated with the policy of forced Sovietization.

The East German regime has been faced with insoluble economic

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problems, principally of food shortages. Poor to fair harvest prospects indicate further food shortages. These and the general shortage of consumer goods are largely responsible for the present widespread popular discontent.

The lack of Soviet maneuverability on Germany has been revealed by its uncompromising stand on the problem of an acceptable peace treaty. The Soviet position in Germany can be expected to remain weak for an indefinite period. The USSR cannot afford to have free elections in East Germany with the resultant almost certain overthrow of the Communist regime. The Kremlin can hope to improve its position in East Germany only as a long range effort.

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In the interim the USSR may forego its effort to bring about the overthrow of Chancellor Adenauer in the September elections in *and replace with* favor of a longer range tactic of exploiting widespread French and West European fears of German rearmament. This stratagem will undoubtedly be supplemented by a propaganda appeal for a big power conference on all outstanding international issues.

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